



National Science Foundation

Launching a technology start-up?

Do you need R&D money to commercialize your concept ?

We Can Help.

Steven Konsek
skonsek@nsf.gov
Program Director
NSF SBIR/STTR programs



National Science Foundation
WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN

Why we fund



why

The journey from scientific discovery to breakthrough products, services, and processes is extremely important for our economy and society.

NSF, “where discoveries begin”, recognizes the crucial role of startups and other small businesses in this process. It also recognizes a major hurdle that these small, innovation-led companies face— lack of seed funding.

With the SBIR/STTR grant program, NSF addresses this funding gap, providing grants to validate highly technical ideas, facilitate scale up, and catalyze commercialization.



What we fund

- High technical risk R&D (unproven, early-stage) for proving the feasibility/ viability of a new product, process or service
- We ONLY fund R&D– but we are extremely commercially focused! Successful proposals stress the importance of R&D on company and product viability
- Validated market need and high commercialization potential if the R&D works
- Almost zero topical focus/restriction

what



What we **DON'T** fund

Projects lacking technical risk or innovation;
“incremental/evolutionary” projects; “straightforward engineering”

- If there's no technical risk, why fund R&D?
- If there's no innovation, it's not appropriate

Projects where we don't see a strong chance of resulting commercial outcomes

- This applies to the project AND the proposing company/team

Projects where our funding won't move the needle

- If we can't make a big impact on the company's prospects, there are usually better ways to raise \$

what
not



How we fund

how

- R&D **grants** to small businesses (mostly start-ups). Nondilutive funding.
- Proposal-driven external merit review process (technical + commercial focus)
- Phase I (\$150k/\$225k), Phase II (\$750k), plus supplemental opportunities (> \$500k)
- NSF NEVER buys anything from grantees and has no preference what they decide to make. The small business decides what product or service best allows them to create commercial outcomes.



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Who we fund

- 86% of awardees have 10 or fewer employees
- 90% of awardee companies were incorporated within the past 5 years
- 73% of awardees had never had a prior Phase II award from any agency
- Several dozen Phase I awardees each year are incorporated based on our funding
- 250-300 new companies start in NSF SBIR every year
- Companies applying for SBIR do not need a link to NSF-funded basic research



who

Connect with NSF SBIR/STTR



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me: skonsek@nsf.gov

Online: <http://www.nsf.gov/eng/iip/sbir/>



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